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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 2327
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY IMMEDIATE 3759
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4927
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0980
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0915
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1754
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4520
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1814
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2539
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2592
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0704
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JAKARTA 000744

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NSC FOR EPHU

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM KISL ID

SUBJECT: "SHOCK RESULT" -- ISLAMIC PARTY LEADS IN KEY GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION

REF: A. JAKARTA - OPS CENTER 04-13-08 TELCON

- 1B. JAKARTA 684
- 1C. JAKARTA 633
- 1D. 07 JAKARTA 2156
- 1E. 06 JAKARTA 13419

JAKARTA 00000744 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Islamic-oriented Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) appears to have registered a stunning electoral upset in West Java, Indonesia's most populous province. Five reputable polling outfits have declared the PKS gubernatorial candidate the winner over better-known rivals. If validated, the victory would provide PKS with significant momentum in advance of the 2009 elections. President Yudhoyono supported the losing incumbent and, for him, the result--driven at least in part by rising anxiety over higher food prices--is potentially ominous. END SUMMARY.

BY THE NUMBERS

12. (U) Indonesia's most populous province--West Java--held its first-ever direct election for governor on April 13. Nearly 65 percent of West Java's 27.9 million eligible voters cast their ballots during an election-day process that unfolded without incident. POL FSN visited several polling sites in Bandung, the provincial capital, and witnessed residents lined up peaceably. President Yudhoyono and the First Lady voted in Bogor, a major West Javan city. (Note: The President hails from East Java, but has been a resident of Bogor--which is close to Jakarta--for years.)

13. (SBU) In terms of the outcome, the screaming headline of the April 14 Jakarta Post, Indonesia's major English-language daily, said it all: "EARLY COUNTS SHOW SHOCK RESULT IN WEST

JAVA ELECTION." While the official results will not be certified until April 20, five polling organizations have declared PKS candidate Ahmad Heryawan the winner by an average of nearly five percentage points over his closest rival. Unofficial preliminary numbers from the West Java Electoral Commission mirrored the polling agency figures. The combined average vote distribution from the five polling outfits was as follows (these figures keep changing as votes come in, but the PKS candidate is always in the lead by several percentage points):

Ahmad Heryawan and Dede Yusuf (PKS and PAN).....	40 percent
Agum Gumelar and Nu'man Abdul Hakim (PDI-P and PPP)....	35 percent
Danny Setiawan and Iwan Sulandjana (Golkar and PD)....	25 percent

HOW WEST JAVA WAS WON

¶4. (SBU) For most election observers, Ahmad Heryawan's apparent victory can be considered nothing less than stunning. Heryawan was pitted against incumbent Danny Setiawan, the President's choice and the candidate of the formidable Golkar political machine, and former Transportation Minister Agum Gumelar of the equally powerful Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P).

¶5. (C) In this fight, Heryawan's odds seemed slim at best. Pre-election polling suggested that the race between Setiawan and Gumelar would be close, with Heryawan trailing behind as a distant third (he was only supported by 12 percent of the respondents in a recent pre-election poll). Some Mission contacts thought Setiawan would prevail, but most considered Gumelar the favorite; no one seemed to believe Heryawan had a chance, even his PKS supporters.

JAKARTA 00000744 002.2 OF 003

¶6. (C) Four key factors appear to have contributed to Heryawan's apparent victory.

-- First and foremost, as is true across Indonesia (see Ref B), higher commodity prices have taken a toll on the average West Java resident. Though West Java is considered a relatively rich province, these rising costs and a lower average standard of living contributed to a sense of anxiety and an anti-incumbent mood.

-- A second issue was the low (by Indonesian standards) turnout on election-day. While the energetic PKS machinery reportedly succeeded in turning out the vote in its suburban Jakarta strongholds, Golkar and PDI-P did not apparently have as much luck in getting their vote out.

-- Third, whereas Golkar and PDI-P had joined forces to defeat PKS in other races, in West Java the two parties fielded separate candidates, effectively dividing the secular-oriented vote.

-- Lastly, West Java has a relatively conservative Islamic population, fertile ground for PKS.

¶7. (C) Lacking the financial resources to go toe-to-toe with its better financed rivals, PKS opted instead to fuse Ahmad Heryawan's strong governing credentials with Dede Yusuf's star power. (Note: Heryawan was a successful provincial bureaucrat while Yusuf is a well known movie actor.) The two relentlessly hammered away at a campaign theme that focused on Islamic values, economic growth, infrastructure repair, and improved education, a message that apparently resonated with working class voters disaffected by the status quo.

¶8. (C) As Rulita Wijayaningdyah, Treasurer of the Building and Wood Workers Union, told Labatt, blue collar voters turned out in droves for PKS primarily because the ticket

represented change. Combined with the party's traditional base of support among younger Muslim intellectuals in the Jakarta suburbs, the support from working class voters made the difference for PKS.

A SIGNATURE WIN FOR PKS

¶9. (C) Though not the largest Islamic political party in Indonesia, PKS was widely viewed nationally as the Islamic party with the most momentum following its strong performance in the 2004 legislative elections. (Note: PKS secured just over eight percent of the parliamentary seats in 2004, after registering only slightly more than one percent of the vote in 1999.) However, successive, demoralizing defeats in the high profile gubernatorial races in Banten and Jakarta (Refs D and E) appeared to have brought that status into question. Another electoral belly flop in West Java could have added to a growing perception that PKS held limited appeal outside of conservative, Islamic circles.

¶10. (C) Following its stunning victory, PKS now looks like it secured the party's biggest prize at the most opportune possible time, providing the party with a huge boost just one year before the legislative and national elections. Party leaders were understandably triumphant after the first "quick count" polls were released, confident the success on the local West Java stage would lead to national success next year. PKS parliamentarian Zulkieflimansyah told poloff that the party's ability to win an election in such a key area indicated that PKS was in position "to do very well in 2009."

LOCAL RACE WITH NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

JAKARTA 00000744 003.2 OF 003

¶11. (C) The results were a real shock. West Java's size and recent history of mirroring national results on the local level point to its potential to serve as a barometer for the 2009 national elections. An incumbent backed by Indonesia's largest party, Golkar, and the President's own political vehicle, the Democratic Party, lost in spectacular fashion, succumbing to a wave of angst over rising food prices and increasing poverty. Put it this way, the incumbent apparently failed to get even 30 percent of the vote, with the two opposition parties netting over 70 percent. That is a very strong anti-incumbent mood.

¶12. (C) Looking ahead to the 2009 legislative and presidential elections, two other key gubernatorial races will take place this year that could potentially serve as crucial data points for gauging the national mood: June 22 in Central Java and July 23 in East Java. As with West Java, these two elections will revolve around local issues, yet will also help measure the depth of frustration with the economic forces making life for the average Indonesian more difficult. The level of frustration in West Java was profound enough that it sparked one of the most surprising election results in Indonesia's relatively short democratic history. If President Yudhoyono is not scared yet, he should be.

HUME